



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

20 Trinity Street • Hartford, Connecticut 06106 - 1628

To: Political Party Committee Chairpersons and Treasurers

From: Jeffrey B. Garfield, Executive Director and General Counsel

Re: Registration of Party Committees for the conduct of Campaign Financing activities  
and Changes to Campaign Finance Laws effective December 31, 2006

Date: December 11, 2006

### Overview

Effective December 31, 2006, there will be significant revisions to our State's campaign finance laws. These changes will affect party committees, political committees (PACs) and candidates seeking the nomination or election to all offices. The most significant changes will occur in campaigns for Statewide offices (Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, State Treasurer, State Comptroller and Secretary of the State, and for the General Assembly). The purpose of this memorandum is to highlight the major changes affecting party committees (state central and town committees).

As you have undoubtedly heard, the General Assembly enacted Public Act # 05-5 in special session on December 1, 2005 and amended it in Public Act # 06-137. These acts contain the most comprehensive reform to Connecticut's campaign finance laws since the post Watergate era of the mid 1970s. In general terms, the new laws:

1. Create a voluntary program known as the ***Citizens' Election Program (CEP)*** that will provide public campaign funds to qualified candidates for the General Assembly in 2008 and Statewide office in 2010, who agree to limit their campaign spending to certain levels, and otherwise abide by the program requirements. In order to qualify for the public grant, the candidate must raise a threshold amount of small contributions from ***individuals only*** in small amounts of no more than \$100 each. Contributions from lobbyists, state contractors, PACs and party committees can not be accepted by a candidate who is seeking to participate in the CEP.
2. Impose prohibitions on contributions and solicitation of contributions by lobbyists and "principals" of state contractors and prospective state contractors to candidates seeking Statewide office or the General Assembly, in most instances, regardless of whether the candidate is or is not a participant in the CEP; and these prohibitions apply to ***party committees***, as well.
3. Transfer the responsibility for receiving state campaign finance reports from the Secretary of the State to ***the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) beginning December 31, 2006*** and therefore the first campaign treasurer's report due January 10, 2007 will be filed with the SEEC. Municipal office filings will

continue to be made with the town clerk of the municipality of holding the election. A town committee treasurer must continue to file the original campaign finance report with the SEEC, and a copy of each with the town clerk of that municipality. All legal responsibility for investigations, enforcement, auditing, advice and the administration of the campaign finance laws will be with one agency—the SEEC.

4. Require the SEEC to develop a new electronic campaign filing program to replace the system currently employed by the Secretary of the State. The current plan is for the SEEC to unveil the new system for use in April 2007. The SEEC is also required to create and maintain a database of “principals” of state contractors and prospective state contractors which *party committee* (and other) treasurers can view in order to ensure that they do not deposit contributions from those sources.

#### **Re-Registration of Party Committees**

The SEEC has developed new registration and other campaign finance forms to ensure that the changes to the State’s Campaign Finance Laws can be properly administered and enforced. As Chairman of a party committee, you are required to complete, sign and have your treasurer and deputy (if any) sign the enclosed registration form, ***SEEC Form 2***. Please return the form by no later than ***January 2, 2007*** to the State Elections Enforcement Commission, 20 Trinity Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Campaign Finance Disclosure Unit, Hartford, CT 06016; ***Attention: Nancy Staniewicz, Elections Officer***. For town committees, party chairs should file a copy of Form 2 with the town clerk of the municipality in which the committee is situated.

Ms. Staniewicz, as many of you know, has been working at the Office of the Secretary of the State for many years, and has joined the staff of the State Elections Enforcement Commission. We are very pleased that Nancy will continue to provide service to the many state campaign finance report filers from her new location at the SEEC. The SEEC intends to communicate with chairs and treasurers by e-mail as much as possible so please provide your e-mail addresses to us on the new registration forms provided.

#### **Highlights of Changes to the law affecting Party Committees**

The most significant changes made to campaign finance laws which affect party committees are the imposition of contribution limitations to candidates for all offices. I am enclosing a chart of the new limitations and restrictions that take effect December 31, 2006. In summary, a town committee will be limited to:

- \$7500 to a candidate for Governor
- \$5000 to a candidate for Lt. Governor, Secretary of the State, Comptroller, Treasurer and Attorney General
- \$5000 to a candidate for State Senate and Probate Judge
- \$3000 to a candidate for State Representative and Chief Executive Officer of a Municipality (e.g. Mayor, First Selectman)

- \$1500 to any other candidate for municipal office

These limits apply separately to primaries and elections, but the candidate must compete in the primary in order for the separate limit to apply. Other limitations to PACs (political committees) can be found in "Revised Contribution Limits & Restrictions," Chart 1 enclosed. State Central Committees should also refer to Chart 1.

Party committees will also be prohibited from receiving contributions from communicator lobbyists, principals of state contractors and prospective state contractors, and their spouses and dependent children, and political committees established or controlled by them. These restricted donors are also prohibited from soliciting contributions for party committees. For a clear listing of what constitutes permissible and prohibited activities in this regard see SEEC Declaratory Ruling 2006-1 available on our website at [www.ct.gov/seec](http://www.ct.gov/seec) See Chart 2 for Special Donor Restrictions.

The "ad book" purchase exception has been retained for town committees but modified. The town committee can sell ads to a business entity of up to \$250 in a calendar year for a program booklet for a fundraising event, but a contractor, prospective state contractor or communicator lobbyist are prohibited from purchasing such ads. The SEEC is required to publish a database of principals of state contractors and prospective state contractors, and the database is scheduled to be available on our website by January 2, 2007. The ad book exception has been eliminated for state central committees.

We will be updating our publication on Campaign Financing for Party Committees during the course of 2007. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions concerning the application of Connecticut's new Campaign Financing laws.

Enclosures (SEEC Form 2, Revised Contribution Limits & Restrictions, Charts 1, 2)

